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An Analysis of the Effects of Prejudice and Discrimination on Members of the Negro Minority Through the Study of Richard Wright's Native Son and The Long Dream

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CONTENTS

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THE PROBLEM

The purpose of this research paper is to study the effects of prejudice on the members of a minority group. More specifically the paper will include an analysis of Richard Wright's Native Son[1] and The Long Dream,[2] with Racial and Cultural Minorities[3] by George Simpson and J. Milton Yinger as background material regarding race relations.

Answers will be sought to the following questions:

1. What are the effects of prejudice in encouraging members of minority groups to accept the dominant group's pattern of motivation and morality?
2. How does group prejudice affect attitudes toward oneself and one's own group?
3. What are the various kinds of responses that can be made to a situation filled with prejudice and discrimination?[4]

Before going further into the problem, it seems necessary to define several terms as they will be used in this paper. The majority or dominant group is in this case American whites. The minority or subordinate group is the American Negro. Prejudice is a predisposition to respond to a certain stimulus in a certain way, or an emotional, rigid attitude

toward a group of people, even though it may be a group only in the mind of the prejudiced person. Prejudice is an attitude, a tendency to respond or a symbolic response. It may never involve overt action toward members of the minority group, either because no situation presents itself, or in situations where one might show antipathy, because other attitudes inhibit open expressions of hostility. Prejudice must not be equated with discrimination, yet the two are closely related. Discrimination is the differential treatment of individuals considered to belong to a particular social group. It is the overt expression of prejudice.[5] Both prejudice and discrimination may be either favorable or unfavorable, but in this paper they will be for the most part unfavorable, and the prejudice and discrimination discussed will be held by whites against Negroes.

BACKGROUND MATERIAL ON THE EFFECTS OF PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION

1. What are the effects of prejudice in encouraging members of minority groups to accept the dominant group's pattern of motivation and morality?

Prejudiced persons often justify their attitudes and actions by reference to the inferior behavior and ideals of the members of the minority group. ~~If~~ Is that inferiority--in terms of the standards of the dominant group--in a significant way the very product of prejudice and discrimination? Sutherland points out that there are many minority-group members who have never known a society composed largely of respectable, law-abiding, industrious families whose ambition and self-discipline were rewarded by a comfortable house, improved status, or a better job. A child is responsive to the rewards and punishments of his immediate environment, his family, his clique, his community. Behavior patterns which bring social approval and satisfaction from these groups are adopted very early. Only slightly does one strive for patterns of action that are approved by society in general.[6]

The class structure is very important in creating significantly different learning environments for children in different class locations. If a Negro from the rural peasantry or the city slums is, from the point of view of the dominant society, careless, without ambition, immoral, or criminal, the causes are to be sought in the personality-forming conditions

which he has experienced. To "explain" or judge the behavior of the adult without a thorough understanding of the experiences of the child is clearly to miss the basic causes. If the dominant elements in American society isolate a segment of the people from contact with the prevailing norms, they should not be surprised at the appearance of a sub-culture with very different standards of conduct and motivations.

Thus variation is to be expected between Negro and white standards in such areas as education, motivation, sexual morality, acceptance of responsibility, ability to look and plan ahead, and regard for the country and its laws.[7]

2. How does prejudice affect attitudes toward oneself and one's own group?

Self-regarding attitudes are as much a product of one's social experience as are attitudes toward other persons and toward social norms. The nature of that experience effectively conditions the basic ego structure, the central core of the personality. At an early age, Negro children develop an awareness of themselves as different, particularly with regard to skin color. This awareness varies with their color and with the social definitions of color differences given by the Negro and white communities.

It is in the context of slights, rebuffs, forbidden opportunities, restraints, and often violence that the minority-group member shapes that fundamental aspect of personality--a sense of oneself and his place in the total scheme of things.

The evaluations of one's own color are affected both by what he is taught in his own group and by the attitudes of the dominant group. White people in the United States have generally and consistently shown a preference for the lighter shades of brown, insofar as they have made any distinctions among Negroes. This has also been true among Negroes, but not without some important countercurrents that create a strong ambivalence of feeling in many Negroes.[8]

"The greatest task in growing up consists of coming to terms with oneself, of learning to know who one is, what one

can do, and how one stands in relation to others."[9] It is almost universally agreed among social scientists that this "coming to terms" is made difficult for Negro children by segregation and prejudice.[10]

The Negro, as a member of the American society, tends to take on the culture of that society, including its prejudices. He sees that most Negroes are "inferior" in occupation, in education, and in general status. He unconsciously comes to feel that by rejecting Negroes and "Negro ways" he can escape being a Negro and all the handicaps that it involves.[11]

Many white people take expressions of lack of solidarity among Negroes as another sign of their inferiority, instead of seeing them as natureal personality consequences in the members of a suppressed group struggling to work out some adjustment to the hostile environment. Self-hatred and feelings of inferiority are not, of course, rational or effective responses, but they are among the natural results of the pressures acting upon a minority group.

Seldom are feelings of inferiority or self-hatred expressed in an unambiguous way. They are more likely to take the form of an ambivalent attitude which shows both antipathy toward and solidarity with one's group.[12]

The ambivalence of feeling of minority-group members toward themselves sometimes takes the form of extreme expressions of "race pride" or chauvinistic claims. It would be a mistake to interpret these as unambiguous signs of

feelings of equality or superiority.

The feelings of inferiority, the self-hatred, and the reciprocal prejudices that may be the product of membership in a group which is the object of prejudice and discrimination are not, however, the only attitudes produced by such experiences. There is a lack of group solidarity, but there is also a group cohesiveness and even an interest in the problems of other minority groups. There are strong tendencies toward self-devaluation but also genuine feelings of pride and self-confidence that come from achievements made in the face of severe handicaps.

Group solidarity or morale, as Arnold Rose calls it, is thus one of the consequences of prejudice. A feeling of common fate and shared problems exists alongside intragroup conflict and jealousy.[13]

3. What are the various kinds of responses that can be made to a situation filled with prejudice and discrimination?

Probably no two persons respond in exactly the same way to the problems they face as members of a minority group. However, it is possible to classify the patterns of adjustment into broad types, for purposes of analysis, and to point out the kinds of persons who are most likely to adopt each type as the primary mode of response to prejudice and discrimination. Response to the dominant world is not simply a matter of individual trial and error, for the culture of a minority group contains traditional adjustment techniques that are passed on, intentionally and unintentionally, to the oncoming generation. There are many variations within the group also.[14] As Charles S. Johnson points out with respect to Negroes, the response to prejudice varies with the regional and cultural setting, the social status of the person involved, the specific situational factors in a given response, and the basic personality type of the individuals, among other factors.[15]

How one learns the nature of his status as a minority group member and acquires modes of adjustment to that status ranges all the way from systematic training by parents to entirely informal and accidental picking up of points of view from small incidents or major crises.

There are three basic types of response to prejudice and discrimination: avoidance, aggression, and acceptance. These types of response represent a special application of the outline

of types of social interaction employed in sociological analysis: association (acceptance), disassociation (aggression), and the absence of communication (avoidance). Few individuals follow one of these patterns at all times, and few adjustments are purely of one type or another. However, it is useful for analytic purposes to distinguish among the three varieties, for they represent important different personality consequences of prejudice and discrimination.[16]

If a member of a minority group cannot abolish the status restrictions under which he lives, he can, at least under many circumstances, avoid aspects of situations and thus reduce their painful and disagreeable impact. Avoidance can take many forms. The most complete form is to withdraw entirely from the minority group; for the Negro, this means to "pass" for white. Upper-class members of a minority are able to avoid some of the prejudice and discrimination directed against their group by sealing themselves off from contact with lower-class members of their group as much as possible, and insulating themselves from their struggles and problems. The avoidance response to prejudice is made by a few in the development of communities composed only of minority-group persons--for example, the all-Negro town of Mound Bayou, Mississippi. Far more common are the segregated areas in large cities which are largely forced upon the minority group but to some degree are encouraged by the desire to find an

island partly free from the prejudice and discrimination of the dominant group. The desire to escape a highly discriminatory situation has often been a powerful motive in the migration of persons of low status.

For most people these rather intensive avoidance techniques are either impossible or held to be undesirable. Most members of minority groups have to face the fact of frequent contact with prejudiced members of the dominant group. They may try to reduce these by ordering goods from a catalogue or making reservations by telephone or patronizing the business and professional people of their own group.[17] E. Franklin Frazier has recently described a somewhat different type of avoidance response. This is an effort not to avoid punishing or humiliating contact with the dominant group, but to escape the feelings of inferiority and futility that the discrimination of the dominant group have forced into one's own self-image.[18]

The second form of adjustment is aggression. From the point of view of a contemporary science of personality, it seems unlikely that members of minority groups could experience the frustrations, the fears, and the tensions that come from their contact with prejudice and discrimination without feeling a large amount of hostility, of desire to strike back, to attack the source of their frustration or a substitute target. The nature of this aggression varies greatly from person to person and from group to group. Much of it will be unconscious--unrecognized as hostility either by the person using it or by

the majority group. A great deal of aggression will be directed away from the primary source of frustration because of the dangers or difficulties in attacking members of the dominant group. Underlying this diversity of expression will be a common personality function.[19]

Some individuals become active and aggressive group leaders, professionally championing the claims of the whole group by editing papers, leading protest groups, organizing boycotts, and trying to persuade friends among the dominant group to support them economically and politically. A few members of subservient groups express their aggression by proclaiming a racial patriotism or a strong group chauvinism. Direct physical aggression against one's oppressors is not unusual, especially among children, but also among adults in some classes and areas. Some counteraggression or aggression is more appropriately seen as against the whole status system than against specific individuals or situations.

Under some circumstances members of a minority group can express their hostility by withdrawing trade from the businesses of the dominant group, or from those individuals in the group who show the most prejudice and discrimination. This is partly an avoidance device, but it is also a sign of aggression. Where there is legal protection, this way of expressing resentment may take the form of organized boycotts, of "don't buy where you can't work" movements. A form of aggression available to, and often used by, even the most powerless member of

an oppressed group is to work slowly and awkwardly, or to leave a job entirely if the treatment is too offensive. Inefficient, lazy, and therefore costly, work is a source of a great deal of complaint from members of the dominant group.

Aggression may be expressed under some circumstances by the withdrawal of the forms of deference and etiquette, by the loss of earlier feelings of affection and the development of feelings of distrust and suspicion. Aggressive feelings may be embodied in literature. This may take the form of folk tales and myths or of written literature. An almost universal way of expressing aggression is humor.[20] To the Negroes the function of the anti-white jokes is partly to pose the whites in a ridiculous light, which to them is a compensation. And partly it is a mechanism of psychological adjustment; they "laugh off" their misfortunes, their faults, their inferiority.[21]

The third form of adjustment is acceptance. Contemporary sociology and cultural anthropology have shown that people can learn to adjust to, and even accept, extremely diverse circumstances that seem strange, painful, or evil to those who have received different training. Standards of value by which the desirability of a given status is judged, as well as the status itself, are a product of society. A whole group may accept what to others seems to be an inferior role because it seems perfectly normal to them. Only contact with other standards of value, the acquisition of levels of aspiration

that are blocked in the old status, may destroy acceptance of that status. There are three general types of acceptance: whole-hearted, specific, and unconscious. Under some circumstances, members of a minority may fairly whole-heartedly accept an inferior position. This pattern of adjustment was fairly common, several decades ago, among American Negroes. It is now limited almost entirely to Negroes found in isolated rural areas and to a few family servants who find their position acceptable because they identify closely with their employers. Far more common than this acceptance of the whole status pattern is acceptance of some specific situation or some phase of a relationship that implies inferiority, either out of belief or out of desire to escape some unwanted aspect of the relationship. There is also a measure of acceptance in the attitude toward oneself and one's group. Even those members of a minority group who have come in closest contact with the values and aspirations of the dominant society, and thus are least willing to accept a categorical position of inferiority, often acquire, by that very contact, attitudes toward themselves and their group which characterize the majority group.[22]

THE PLOT OF NATIVE SON

At the beginning of the novel Native Son, twenty year old Bigger Thomas is living with his pious mother and his younger brother and sister in a rat-infested, dilapidated, one-room, South Chicago apartment, for which the family pays exhorbitant rental fees. Through a relief agency Bigger gets employment as a chauffer at the home of Henry Dalton, wealthy owner of Negro property (including the run-down tenement in which the Thomases dwell), loyal supporter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, and heavy contributor to institutions of higher education for Negroes.

During his first assignment as a chauffer, Bigger takes Mary Dalton, a Communist, to meet her Communist boyfriend, Jan Erlone. At the request of the couple, Bigger drives to a Southside cafe and reluctantly joins the lovers in eating and drinking. Afterwards he drives the intoxicated pair about Washington Park until Jan boards a northbound trolley. Entrusted with attending Mary, Bigger takes her home where, because of her drunken state, he is obliged to carry her bodily to her upstairs bedroom. Contemplating sexual possession of the girl, he is frightened by the approach of blind Mrs. Dalton. To insure his safety, he unintentionally smothers Mary to death with a pillow and subsequently burns her corpse in the furnace in an effort

to remove all incriminatory evidence. To make his innocence appear doubly certain, he craftily involves Jan and thereafter plans, with the unwilling cooperation of his girlfriend, Bessie Mears, to extract ransom from the Daltons.

Eventually discovered in his guilt, Bigger flees and murders Bessie in order to remove the only person to whom he has confessed the crime. But Bigger is finally trapped after a vast manhunt throughout Chicago's Black Belt. In a hate-charged trial, Bigger is sentenced to death in spite of an able plea for life-imprisonment by Boris A. Max, an elderly Jewish lawyer, also a Communist, who contends that ill-ordered American society, rather than Bigger himself, is responsible for the "heinous and revolting murders" committed by the accused. Bigger dies in the electric chair.

ANALYSIS OF NATIVE SON

Effects of Prejudice in Encouraging Members of Minority Groups to Accept the Dominant Group's Pattern of Motivation and Morality

Dorothy Canfield Fisher wrote an introduction to Native Son. She describes in detail the underlying causes of Bigger's attitude and his type of mind. Bigger, simultaneously with his indoctrination of the Negro's inferiority, is introduced to the glowing account of American ideals and what they entail. The picture of the American citizen is surprising, particularly what the American citizen should be. Bigger is made to understand that America is unique in its fundamental concept of individual freedom. All people are theoretically permitted to enjoy the freedoms of America and to participate as active citizens. The ideal American citizen is so conditioned that he becomes independent, courageous, and happy. He is encouraged to work out his own destiny within the cultural pattern in which he lives. American dogma is that any man may achieve financial success, leisure, and power. Bigger knows this and wants desperately to be a genuine American citizen. He knows, however, from bitter experience that he cannot attain the ideal because he is a Negro. This same society which holds out such an attractive way of life denies self-realization to him. He gropingly asks, "Why?" 23-1

The conflicting forces at work within this youthful mind baffle Bigger and at last overwhelm him. The

consequence of his state of mind is an incurable neurosis. This psychological state produces in Bigger a criminal whose atrocious crimes astound and horrify the reader. It is clear, from the author's point of view, that society is responsible for Bigger's crime. The only crime he commits actually is the crime of being.[24]

Richard Wright develops a thesis in Native Son. In effect he points up the fact that a Negro, placed in a hostile, white environment which denies him self-realization, throws the burden of the responsibility for his crimes of frustration and fear upon society. In order to drive home his thesis, Wright insists painstakingly upon the understanding of psychological and sociological factors underlying the action of the novel.[25] In developing his grim thesis, Wright shows that the Negro's environment provokes crime, and unless the Negro is granted self-realization, one like Bigger will murder whites in order to obtain it. Striking at the core of race relationships, Wright does prove his case. Bigger's terrifying behavior pattern results from a special attitude produced by environment. Bigger, in truth, is forced to play such an unconventional role. In reality Bigger is a victim of society.[26]

Throughout the book, Bigger and his family and friends express their feelings regarding their position in the "white world."[27] For example, as a young boy, Bigger is discussing his future with his friend Gus. They watch an

airplane fly over the city. "I could fly a plane if I had a chance," says Bigger. "If you wasn't black and if you had some money and if they'd let you go to that aviation school, you could fly a plane," Gus answers.[28]

When Bigger is in jail, awaiting his trial, he says to his lawyer, "I ain't asking nobody to be sorry for me . . . I'm black. They don't give black people a chance."[29] In the trial, the lawyer says in unmistakable terms that the damming up of the Negroes' aspirations, and the denial to him of unrestricted entry into the whole environment of the society in which he is cast, may lead Negroes, in conjunction with others, toward a new Civil War in America. The lawyer is a Jew. As a member of a group which has known something of oppression, he pleads for extenuation for his client both on broad grounds of justice and on the grounds that white society drove Bigger to his crime by repressing him.[30]

Life with Negro people is, on account of race, more difficult than it is with whites. Black men are condemned before the bar of white justice simply because they are black. Wright insists that unless American society changes its attitudes toward Negroes, they will be driven to crimes such as Bigger commits. He makes of Bigger a spokesman for the dispossessed, the underprivileged, and the persecuted millions of Negroes who inhabit America.[31] His lawyer says:

> Multiply Bigger Thomas twelve million times, allowing for environmental and temperamental variations, and for those Negroes who are completely under the influence of the church, and you have the psychology of the Negro people. But once you see them as a whole, once your eyes leave the individual and encompass the mass, a new quality comes into the picture. Taken collectively, they are not simply twelve million people; in reality they constitute a separate nation, stunted, stripped, and held captive within this nation, devoid of political, social, economic, and property rights.[32]

The Effect of Prejudice on One's Attitudes Toward Oneself and One's Own Group

Bigger Thomas is the embodiment of a particular type of neurotic Negro. The psychology involved reflects the interaction between human personality and his environment. The origin of Bigger's neurosis is frustration based on fear.[33] As a child he has been nurtured in bigotry and often violent human relationships in Mississippi. From infancy he has been taught at home and in contact with whites that he is a Negro. In a fight with whites, he receives an injury. His parents admonish him earnestly not to fight back but to take all punishment inflicted upon him by whites. Bigger's nature rebels against such injustice. Removed to Chicago, he then settles in a ghetto which is all that his family's economic standing can afford. Here the pattern of race relationship changes but only relatively. Bigger is still excessively aware of his race. Conditioning, new and raw experiences in Chicago, drive home the lesson already mastered that he is a despised intruder or a merely tolerated Negro. He ponders over his fate and becomes increasingly embittered and ultimately mad.[34]

Bigger's mental condition has been produced by the treatment of the Negro by the whites for hundreds of years in America. He is a "member of the oppressed race, living in the midst of the oppressors, yet cut off from

them socially, and in Bigger's case economically because he is unemployed." 35 13 His behavior pattern becomes anti-social in the face of such punishment. Thus, he stands in sullen helplessness. This state of mind explains how he is able to feel happiness in freely accepting the responsibility for a crime that he commits accidentally. 36 14

Bigger is very self-conscious about his race even though he accepts his blackness as a fact of life. He is embittered only because he cannot effect self-realization and is disgruntled over the whole business of living as he knows it. 37 15

In the presence of whites, he is suspicious and frightened. He loathes whites, and with the Daltons, Bigger is an inarticulate, nervous black man. To the perceptive Mrs. Dalton this lack of control communicates itself. In fact, it elicits sympathy from her. Mary provokes fear because she recalls violence, so her friendly gestures are interpreted to presage trouble. Bigger therefore hates her intensely. In company with Jan and Mary, his fear may be best seen. Here is that warped youth who is so conditioned that intimate relationship with whites drives him almost frantic. Here is the picture of a self-conscious, black man thinking about two whites. 38 16 Bigger's mind races in this way:

> Maybe they did not despise him? But they made him feel his black skin by just standing there looking at him, one holding his hand and the other smiling.

> He felt he had no physical existence at all right then; he was something he hated, the badge of shame which he knew was attached to a black skin. It was a shadowy region, a No Man's Land, the ground that separated the white world from the black that he stood upon. He felt naked, transparent; he felt that this white man, having helped to put him down, having helped to deform him, held him up now to look at him and to be amused. At that moment he felt toward Mary and Jan a dumb, cold, and inarticulate hate.[39]

Richard Wright says of his own work that the entire long scene in the furnace room is but a depiction of how warped the whites have become through their oppression of Negroes.[40] If there had been one person in the Dalton household who viewed Bigger Thomas as a human being, the crime would have been solved in half an hour. Did not Bigger know himself that it was the denial of his personality that enabled him to escape detection so long. The one piece of incriminating evidence which would have solved the 'murder mystery' was Bigger's humanity, and the Daltons, the investigators, and the newspaper men could not see or admit the living clue of Bigger's humanity under their very own eyes.[41]

It is through accidental murder that Bigger blossoms into full consciousness as a personality.[42] He is at once free of the society in which he lives. He can now analyze the relationship between the Negro and the white world. For the first time in his life he lives as a whole human being. He becomes a human being only by the most violent defiance of not only the legal, but the social and moral

concepts of the society which oppresses him.

In the world that Bigger knows, the whole process of life hinges on the black and white designations. White human beings in America generally symbolize wealth and power. Black human beings equate poverty and misery in most cases. The whites are in the ascendency while the blacks must be suppressed. Wright places in Max's defense for Bigger's life precisely what he feels American society has done to Negroes like Bigger.[43][21] The passage reads:

> The hate and fear which we have inspired in him, woven by our civilization into the very structure of his consciousness, into his blood and bones, into the hourly functioning of his personality, have become the justification of his existence. Every time he comes in contact with us, he kills! It is a physiological and psychological reaction, embedded in his being. Every thought he thinks is potential murder. . . . Every movement of his body is an unconscious protest. . . .Every glance of the eye is a threat. . . .He was impelled toward murder as much through the thirst for excitement, exultation, and elation as he was through fear! It was his way of living![44][22]

The core of Wright's novel is the insistence upon viewing the conflict between the two racial groups.[45][23] The apparent discrepancy between Negroes and whites in the more tangible necessities of life and opportunities for realizing them disturbs the reader's rational process. Wright asserts that humanity need not suffer. The whole circumstance of social misery equates action. Recognition of the problem leads customarily to change in America.

Acquiescence to the idea of change in favor of full equality of status for Negroes became an intellectual conviction years ago. Application of the principle or formulation of working techniques for making the idea a practical reality have yet to come. ~~46~~ 24

Responses That Can be Made to Situations Filled With Prejudice and Discrimination

In White Man, Listen,[47] Richard Wright gives his views on the psychological reactions of oppressed people. The situation of the lives of Negroes evokes in them an almost unconscious tendency to hide their deepest reactions from those they fear would penalize them if they suspected what the Negroes really felt. In America, this acting is a perfected system; it is almost impossible for the white man to determine just what a Negro is really feeling unless that white man is gifted with a superb imagination. This acting regulates the manner, the tone of voice, even, in which most Negroes speak to white men. The Negro's voice is almost always pitched high when addressed to a white man. In some instances an educated Negro will try to act as uneducated as possible in order not to merit rebuff from whites.

The fear inspired by white domination breeds a tendency to make Negroes pretend. And this same unconscious tendency to pretension will spur them to pretend to accept an ideology in which they do not believe. They accept it in order to climb out of their prisons. Many a black boy in America has seized upon the rungs of the Red ladder to climb out of his Black Belt. Hence, an ideology here becomes a means toward social intimacy.[48]

There is a state of mind among the elite Negroes to reject that which they realize hurts, degrades, or shames

them. It is a state of mind that compels people to protect themselves against truths that would; it is a deep, unconscious mechanism that prompts one to evade, deny, or seek explanations for problems other than those that prevail, for one does not wish to acknowledge a state of affairs that induces a loss of face.

Not all evasion or resistance on the part of the subject people is positive. Much of it is a flight into useless identification. It is an attempt to prove that, though smarting under a sense of inferiority, they are the equals of those who oppress them. If the present is painful, then seek shelter in the past.[49]

Wright does have to make one admission though: "Environmental buffetings, crass racial distinctions, class discriminations, uprootings caused by migration, continual disillusionments, imprisonment for rebellious acts--all these hammer blows need not always produce shattered or mangled personalities. Shifting through such grinding social sieves are some whose characters are singularly free and whose apprehension of life is broad indeed."[50] *

* It might be noted that Wright's works are almost devoid of such people.

Simpson and Yinger, it will be remembered, classify responses made to a situation filled with prejudice and discrimination in the categories of avoidance, acceptance, and aggression.

One means of avoidance is to pass for white, which means complete withdrawal from the minority group. This is not shown at all in Native Son, for the Negro characters were obviously Negroid in appearance and therefore could not pass. The Thomas family does live in a community for Negroes only, the Black Belt of Chicago, though more by force and necessity than by choice. In this way they avoid much contact with whites. However, when Bigger is offered a job in which he will be working for and with whites, he does accept it, though it takes a good deal of persuasion from his mother. Bigger takes the job in spite of the fact that it is for whites, simply because he must have some means to support the family and he knows the relief agency will trouble him if he does not accept some job. He works in the white world by day, but he retreats to the Black Belt when his work is through.

Migration is another form of avoidance, and Bigger's family has migrated from the Deep South to Chicago, where they find practically the same discriminatory conditions, though to a lesser degree.

In the realm of acceptance, Bigger and his family and friends accept their subordination only to the extent that

they have to, but they do not do so willingly. The Thomas family rents a one-room, rat-infested apartment from Mr. Dalton, a white man who makes a good deal of his substantial income by exploiting Negroes, realizing that their money is going into the hands of whites, but unable to do anything about it. When working for the Daltons, Bigger seemingly accepts whites' standards of behavior for Negroes, mostly because he fears to do otherwise. Outwardly, it appears as if he accepts his subordination, but actually he resents the position he is required to take.

As the main character, Bigger gives much more evidence of aggression than of avoidance or acceptance. Much of his aggression is physical, and it is directed against individuals and the status system as a whole. As David L. Cohn said: "The race hatred of this hero, Bigger Thomas, is directed with equal malevolence and demoniac intensity toward all whites, whether they are Mary Dalton, the moony Negrophile whom he murdered, or the vague white men who seemed to bar his youthful ambition to become an aviator or to join the navy." [51]

In his article "How Bigger War Born" [52] Wright explains those qualities of personality which crystallize into a type like Bigger. In his varied experiences in Mississippi, Wright became acquainted with several individual Negroes who, even though unlettered, intuitively resented the role

they were forced to play in the world. Fully aware of the consequences of their acts, these Negroes dared to take their lives in their own hands. They flouted defiantly traditions of white supremacy in an effort to break the stranglehold of oppression imposed by Mississippi whites in control of affairs. This control manifested itself in denial of opportunity to the men. Each in his own way found it necessary to commit a violent crime which resulted in his death in order to enjoy real freedom in that moment between death and eternity. Deeply imbedded within each man is the sincere and honest desire to participate as a human being without limitations or a set pattern of life which the order forces him to pursue. Bigger Thomas is a composite of these men. He, like his prototype, is driven to crime by fears and frustrations produced by society.[53]

With Bigger there is always a disproportionate amount of fear, an anxiety, which rests squarely upon his utter race consciousness. As a Negro all of the ideals espoused by men echoing the ethos of the American democratic republic must be denied him or granted grudgingly with emphasis upon the fact that he is a Negro. Bigger is defeated before he is born. Brooding over his plight, he becomes a frightened and bewildered misfit. This leads him in the end to become a violent youth who must be eliminated by society.[54]

Environment is too overwhelming for Bigger. He commits one crime incidentally, then commits another more fiendish crime. This is not the type of behavior of a youth who has control of himself or has adjusted to the world. This is fear out of proportion to our norms, but society produced this youth with its warping influences. Bigger has never been accepted as a human being. He cannot succeed. He is not permitted to have the luxury of an ambition. He has a tragic end because he resents this frustration, this sense of failure and defeat.[55]

If Wright advances the premise of the injustices of the Negro, he in turn presents and clarifies the position of the majority group. Of course, Bigger must die, but somehow society does not avenge but defeats itself in Bigger's electrocution. He bequeaths a disturbing memory that society in taking its proscribed course and regular measure does not kill Bigger's spirit, and he triumphs in death.[56]

According to Constance Webb (Phylon, Spring, 1949), "Bigger is not saying, nor is Wright trying to say, that all Negroes must individually murder people who individually represent oppression. What Wright is striving for is the understanding of the social significance of the act and the recognition as a social fact of what he has meant to Bigger." [57]

Wright says of the character he created: "Bigger is a product of a dislocated society; he is a dispossessed and disinherited man; he is all of this and he lives amid the greatest possible plenty on earth and he is looking and feeling for a way out. . . .Granting the emotional states, the tensity, the fear, the hate, the impatience, the sense of exclusion, the ache for violent action, the emotional and cultural hunger, Bigger's conditioned organism will not become an ardent, or even lukewarm, supporter of the status quo." [58] "In Native Son I tried to show that a man, bereft of a culture and unanchored by property, can travel but one path if he reacts positively but unthinkingly to the prizes and goals of civilization; and that one path is emotionally blind rebellion." [59]

CONCLUSIONS: NATIVE SON

Richard Wright's background in Mississippi consisted of numerous effronteries to his personal dignity. His childhood may be best described as one of poverty, hunger, and brutality. He experienced the worst in race relationships.[60-25] Wright believes that the urban environment of Chicago, affording a more stimulating life, makes the Negroes react more violently to prejudice and discrimination than even in the South. It is not that Chicago segregates Negroes more than the South, but that Chicago has more to offer, that Chicago's physical aspect does so much more to dazzle the mind with a taunting sense of possible achievement that the segregation it does impose brings forth from Bigger a reaction more obstreperous than in the South.[61-26]

Knowing that poor Negro-white relationships will endure forever, Wright resolved to relate this particular set of his experiences to the world. The only feasible plan was to create a fictional character that would reveal the yearnings of his tortured mind. His case was not to be confined to this character alone. Millions of Negroes still undergo to a degree the same type of experience. Transferring this personal set of experiences to an imaginative creation, Wright seeks his apostleship for the Negro.[62-27]

THE PLOT OF THE LONG DREAM

Rex "Fishbelly" Tucker is the son of a Negro undertaker, Tyree Tucker, who after years of truckling to the doctrine of white supremacy has managed to raise his family to the level of semi-poverty that passes in the state of Mississippi for Negro affluence. In the presence of white men, Tyree bows and scrapes, proudly declaring himself a "good nigger" and a resolute opponent of racial equality. To Fishbelly he explains that there is no other way for a Southern Negro to get ahead. Tyree believes that the only way he can stay "on top" is to be part of the white corruption that controls his immediate world. By exchanging favors for favors, he believes he is building security for his family in a society where no other way is open.

Much to his pious mother's dismay, Fishbelly leaves school at sixteen and goes to work for his father, who seems to have a talent for making money. Fishbelly not only acquires sexual experience but, at his early age, has a mistress, Gladys, and an apartment to keep her in. When Gladys dies in a bordello fire, along with some forty others, Fish learns that his father is co-owner of the bordello, owner of various other illicit establishments, and an agent of corrupt municipal officials in the exploitation of vice in the Negro section. Tyree has paid the police regularly to keep them from enforcing

the fire regulations on any of his buildings, and when the bordello burns, the chief of police demands the return of a number of cancelled checks that could easily be used to incriminate him. Tyree surrenders most of the checks but retains a few to make sure that the chief will think twice before bringing charges against him.

Fish feels that if he helps his father to hide the missing checks, he is conniving at the perpetuation of the status quo that he has decried as humiliating and abhorrent. Eventually he abandons his social convictions in favor of family loyalty and comes to his father's aid.

Tyree struggles to save his life and at least some part of his fortunes, but he is murdered by the white officials he has served. Fish spends two years in prison on a trumped-up rape charge. When at last released, still fearful, he flees to France.

ANALYSIS OF THE LONG DREAM

Effects of Prejudice in Encouraging Members of Minority Groups to Accept the Dominant Group's Pattern of Motivation and Morality

Motivation in The Long Dream is much the same as it is in Native Son, although it is not played up so much. The Negro characters feel the effects of suppression as it affects their everyday lives. The feelings of Fish and his friends are brought out in a spontaneous imitation of a conversation between a Negro man and a white man:

> Zeke, imitating a rich white man: "Sam, you said you wanted to see me? What you want, nigger?"
> Sam, acting with dignity: "I want to talk to you about justice for black folks--"
> Zeke, amazed: "Nigger, what you mean talking to me like that? What do you want with justice? You getting along awright, ain't you?"
> Sam, indignantly: "I'm talking about us getting good jobs, Mr. Zeke. We black folks--"
> Zeke, haughtily: "What you niggers always whining about? I ain't your master! Go get you a job! I..Make a job! We white folks made ours, didn't we? When you ask me for justice, you make yourself a slave. Nigger, git away from here and stop bothering me. Git out of my house, or I'll shoot you--!"
> Sam, enraged, draws a gun and shoots Zeke: "Bang! There! I shot you first!"
> Zeke clasps his hands over his heart, walls his eyes, and sinks to the grass.
> Zeke, in a hoarse whisper: "Nigger, you done shot me...Why you do that?"
> Sam, yelling angrily: "cause you're mean, that's why!"
> Zeke, dying: "Nigger, you done beat me... You the best man...Here, take my house, my money, and my wife..."
> Repressing their giggles, Fishbelly and Tony watch Zeke die. 63

Fish senses that his whole life is a nightmare. He has a problem of confusion of values. Bitterly, as he rejects

the white man's world, he can never get rid of a suspicion that the white man may be right. He is not merely alienated from the culture in which he was born; he is alienated from reality. He can escape and can become relatively free from fear and pressure, but he justly wonders whether he can find himself.[64]

Tyree has his own ideas about how Negroes must get along in the white man's world. In the presence of whites, he is what the whites call a "good nigger," which means that he seemingly accepts his subordinate position. He constantly debases himself in the presence of whites. Also, he has made himself the indispensable Negro contact in the Black Belt. As an undertaker he frequently patches up dead black bodies beaten by the police. But all this does not indicate that Tyree accepts his inferior position. He knows he is a black man in a white man's world. He uses the authorities just as they use him.[65] For instance, when Fish is arrested for trespassing, he is questioned extensively and threatened by the police, but when Tyree tells the police that Fish is his son, Fish is let free, paroled to his father.

Tyree warns his son at an early age about treatment of white women:

> "Son," he said slowly, "soon sap's going to rise in your bones and you going to be looking at women. ...Look, son, BUT DON'T LOOK WHITE! YOU HEAR?" His voice grew bitter. "Son, there ain't nothing

> a white woman's got that a black woman ain't got. Ain't nothing but a white-woman tramp's going to have anything to do with you nohow, so don't get killed 'cause of a tramp. Keep away from 'em, son. When you in the presence of a white woman, remember she means death! The white folks hate us, fight us, kill us, make laws against us; but they use this damned business about white women to make what they do sound right. So don't give 'em no excuse, son. They hate you the moment you's born and all your life they going to be looking for something to kill you for. But don't let 'em kill you for that. There ain't no bigger shame for a black man than to die fooling with a no-good white gal. You hear what I'm saying, Fish?"
>
> "Yessir, Papa," he breathed.
>
> His mother's head was bowed upon the kitchen table.
>
> "The white folks in this town hate me," his father continued in a bitter whisper. "They hate me 'cause I'm independent. I bury the black dead. They wouldn't touch a black man's dead body even to make money, so they let me bury 'em..." [66]

To Tyree this is one of the facts of life for a Negro man. It is to be despised, but nothing can be done about it. Tyree shows Fish an example of what he has taught him. As he prepares for burial the mutilated body of a young Negro who had accepted the sexual invitation of a white woman, Tyree says: "One more black dream dead... a dream that can't come true." [67] As Fish comes to see it, every black man can dream, but the white world will see to it that the dream becomes a nightmare.[68]

Tyree summarizes his opinion of the Negro's position in the white world with these thoughts:

> ...how poverty-stricken was their outlook, their chances, their hopes! All of their hours were

spent frenziedly within the life area mapped out by white men. Suddenly he willed himself as far away from this sodden hopelessness as possible. But the moment his mind tried to embrace the idea of something different, it went blank. He had heard of Jews wandering from nation to nation, of refugees roaming the face of the earth, but black folks remained in the same spot in peace and war, in summer and winter; they either obeyed or dodged the laws of the white man and never moved except from one set of white masters to another. They had grown used to accepting white tormentors as a part of the world, like trees, rivers, mountains--like the sun and the moon and the stars...All right, since they did not know enough to run, it was better to lash out at something, no matter what. [69]

The Effect of Prejudice on One's Attitudes Toward Oneself and One's Own Group

All of Richard Wright's books have been about the shaping of Negro identities, including his own. But the thought of Africa in this connection had not come to the top before The Long Dream, neither in the life of Bigger Thomas, nor in his own early years, as told in Black Boy, nor in his 1953 novel The Outsider. It appears for the first time in Wright's fiction in The Long Dream, in a conversation among four teen-age boys.[70] One of the boys, Sam, is the son of a strong race-man type who thinks Negroes ought to acquire as African the identity denied them as Americans. He brings the matter to his friends, and they try it out on Fish: [71]

> "Fish, you want to go to Africa?"
> Fish blinked, looking from black face to black face.
> "Huhn? To Africa?" Fish asked. "What for?"
> Zeke and Tony stomped their feet with glee. Sam scowled.
> "I told you," Zeke screamed triumphantly.
> "Fish, you sure looked funny when you heard that word 'Africa'!" Tony whooped.
> "But who's going to Africa?" Fish asked, seeking the point of the debate.
> "Nobody but damn fools!" Zeke said emphatically.
> "Nobody but fatheads!" Tony growled. [72]

Sam goes on to charging them with wanting to be white, and when the others indignantly deny it, he taxes them with trying to straighten their hair, "like white folks' hair." But it is not to make it look white but to look nice, the boys answer. Sam sneers back that this is

because white folks think straight hair is nice, and the others scream that he is lying. Sam then makes Fish admit that if he went back far enough, he had to agree that his folks had come from Africa: 73

> Sam stared at Fishbelly and asked; "Fish, what's your color?"
> "M-my color?" Fishbelly asked stammeringly. "Hell, man, can't you s-see I'm black?"
> "Yeah?" Sam asked ironically. "And why you black?"
> "I was born that way," Fishbelly said resentfully.
> "But there's a reason why you got a black color," Sam was implacable.
> "My mama's black. My papa's black. And that makes me black," Fishbelly said.
> "And your mama's mama and your papa's papa was black, wasn't they?" Sam asked softly.
> "Sure," Fishbelly said with a resentful hum, afraid of the conclusions to which his answers were leading.
> "And where did your mama's mama's mama and your papa's papa's papa come from?" Sam next wanted to know.
> "F-from A-Africa, I reckon," Fishbelly stammered.
> "You just reckon?" Sam was derisive. "You know damn well where--"
> "Okay, they came from Africa." Fishbelly tried to cover up his hesitancy.
> Sam now fired his climatic question: "Now, just stand there and tell me what is you?"
> Before Fishbelly could reply, Zeke and Tony set up a chant: "Fishbelly's an African! Fishbelly's an African." 74

Sam then tries to prove to the confused and uncomfortable Fish that if he was no longer African he certainly could not say he was an American: 75

> "All I know about Africa's what I read in the geography book at school," Fish mumbled, unwilling to commit himself.
> "Sam wants us to get naked and run wild and eat with our hands and live in mud huts!" Zeke

ridiculed Sam's thesis.
"I want to stay where I am," Fish confessed finally.
"Okay," Sam agreed sarcastically. "Nobody wants to go to Africa...Awright. Who wants to go to America?"
The three boys stared incredulously at Sam.
"Sam's done gone stone crazy," Tony moaned.
"We awready in America, you fool!" Zeke yelled.
"Aw, naw, you ain't!" Sam cried hotly. "You niggers ain't nowhere. You ain't in America, 'cause if you was, you'd act like Americans--"
"I'M AN AMERICAN!" Zeke thundered.
"Nigger, you dreaming!" Sam preached..."You can't live like no American, 'cause you ain't no American. And you ain't no African neither. So what is you? Nothing! Just nothing!"
. . .
Zeke and Tony walked off. Fish had not known what side to take.[76]

Fish does not really know who or what he is. His concept of himself as a young boy and even as a young man is one of a conflict of values. He does not agree with his father's ways of getting along in the world, but his own methods of trying to fight the whites fail in the end, and he too suffers in the hands of the unjust white man. Fish and his friends discuss what a Negro is:

"Who's a nigger?" Zeke asked, fists clenched.
Sam glared. Fish wondered if Sam would hurl the supreme insult.
"A nigger's a black man who don't know who he is," Sam made his accusation general.
"You calling me a nigger?" Zeke pressed threateningly.
"You know what you is?" Sam countered without retracting.
"Sure, I know," Zeke said.
"Then why you asking me?" Sam questioned logically. "A nigger's a black man who don't know who he is, 'cause he's too damned dumb to know."

"Lissen to the professor," Tony sneered.
"When you know you a nigger, then you ain't no nigger no more," Sam reasoned. "You start being a man! A nigger's something white folks make a black man believe he is--"
"Your papa's done stuffed you with crazy ideas," Tony said.
"Your old man's got Africa on the brain and he's made you a copycat," Zeke pronounced.
"What you-all talking about?" Fishbelly asked, troubled, puzzled. 77

Tyree is more definite in his opinion of his place in the total scheme of things. After the climax of a Negro lynching, Tyree addresses his wife:

"...You a woman and you don't know what life is in the South for black folks. Lissen: when them white folks get all roused, when they start thinking of us like black devils, when they start being scared of their own shadows, and when they get all mixed up in their minds about their women--when that happens they want blood! And won't nothing on this earth satisfy 'em but some blood! And there can't be no peace in this town 'less they get their blood! When white folks feel like that, somebody's got to die! Emma, it was either you, me, or Fish--"
"Naw," Emma breathed in horror.
"--or somebody. This time it was poor Chris. And I'm glad it was Chris." He swallowed. "We weak and we got to be honest ...We can live only if we give a little of our lives to the white folks. That's all and that's the truth."
• • •
"But mebbe he wasn't guilty!" Emma wailed.
"He was g ilty," Tyree ruled...He was so furious he was speechless.
Fishbelly now felt that his father hated the white people.
• • •
"You lucky, Tyree," Emma signed. "You don't work for white folks..."
"I'd die 'fore I work for 'em!" father screamed.
Fishbelly now felt that his father hated the white people too.

> "Poor Chris," Emma sobbed into her hands. His father's sudden changes of attitude had filled Fishbelly with wonder; there had been in those changes a bitter pride, but also a black defeat. He knew intuitively that his father, hating the demands of the white folks, had made a bargain with himself to supply the blood that he felt that the white folks wanted in order to buy a little security for himself, but, since his security could be had only by making victims of black men, he hated the black men too. All of which meant that he was consumed by self-hatred. [78]

Tyree believes that for a Negro to get along with a white man, he has to beat him at the white man's game. He advises his son:

> "You see, Fish, these goddamned crazy white folks respect me...I know these white folks better'n they know themselves. There ain't nothing I couldn't get from 'em if I tried. . . . I'll show you how to twist these no-good white folks 'round your little finger. . . . don't let these white folks get you down. . . . White folks see eleven inches on a foot rule; we black folks see the whole rule. Fish, the only way to git along with white folks is to grin in their faces and make 'em feel good and then do what you want to behind their backs! . . .Son, Chief of Police Cantley knows me for twenty years. Friend of mine. . . By Gawd, I done buried many a black man he done shot to death. I did 'im favors, fixed up dead black folks he beat up, fixed 'em so you couldn't tell from looking at 'em that they'd been beat to death. . . . Let me tell you the secret, Fish. A white man always wants to see a black man either crying or grinning. I can't cry, ain't the crying type. So I grin and git anything I want. . . .Fish, white folks is scared to death of us! . . .White folks know damn well that if they give us half a equal chance, we'd beat 'em, come out on top..." [79]

In exchange for these favors to white men, Tyree is able to run his bordellos and dance halls without

interference, protect the interests of himself and many of his Negro friends, and above all feel some sense of security for himself and his family.

Responses That Can be Made to Situations Filled With Prejudice and Discrimination

The Tucker family avoids contact with whites as much as possible. Especially to Tyree, the lines are clearly drawn. Tyree does not work for white folks, and says he would rather die than do so. He believes whites appreciate the fact that he is an undertaker, for whites would not want to bury the black bodies anyway. The Tucker family never rides streetcars, trains, or busses. They never eat in any but black-owned restaurants. For such reasons, Fish has been protected from experiencing a lot of obvious Jim Crow.[80] The Tuckers live in the Negro section of their town, and venture to the white section only with good reason, and also with caution.

In the end of the story, Fish exemplifies a direct form of avoidance as he flees to France. Several of his buddies are in the service, stationed in France, and they write him of the comparative freedom they have in that country, and urge him to join them there as soon as he gets out of jail. Fish heads for France as soon as he is freed, and spends little time observing conditions in other parts of the United States en route.

The Tuckers, though it may seem so, do not accept the status system as it is. They merely go along with it out of necessity. Tyree goes around it as much as possible. He "uses" whites as he knows they "use" him, feeling that

it is the only way for a Negro to get ahead. Tyree is the picture of humility in the presence of whites, conforming to the "good nigger" stereotype and proclaiming to be against racial equality. To Fish, who is appalled by these servile antics, he explains that it is the only way for a Southern Negro to get along with whites. By getting the whites on his side, Tyree is able to manipulate them.[81]

Young Fish most clearly represents aggression as a response to prejudice and discrimination. He is not willing to accept subordination even to the extent that Tyree does. Tyree tells his son: "White folks know damn well that if they give us half a equal chance, we'd beat 'em, come out on top--" "But I want a equal chance!" Fish interrupts his father.[82]

As a young boy, most of Fish's aggression is verbal. He and his friends discuss whites and their dislike for them. They fear to take stronger action, and are so often shut off from whites that they do not have the chance. As previously stated, aggression may take the forms of literature or humor. When Fish leaves school at the age of sixteen, the high school principal gives him some "words of wisdom," a hint that enables him to grasp the structure of his racial world, the origins of its peculiar strength and the genesis of its fantastic feebleness:

"Well, Fish, my boy, I was sorry to see you leave school," Professor Butler said. "But if you want to go out into the world, then, by all means, do it. I'll give you a little rhyme that'll help you to understand our folks. I didn't invent this, but listen to it:

Big niggers have little niggers upon
their backs to bite 'em.
And little niggers have lesser niggers,
and so on ad infinitum.
And the big niggers themselves, in turn,
have bigger niggers to go on;
While these again have bigger still, and
bigger still, and so on.

"Watch that rhyme, Fish, and you'll see that it explains a lot. The white folks are on top of us, and our own folks are on top of our folks, and God help the black man at the bottom."

Fishbelly laughed at that ditty, but, as he dashed down dusty streets hunting defaulting tenants, as he scoured dance halls, bars, restaurants, and dives, he learned that the ditty was truer than funny. [83]

It is at the climax of the book that true aggression is shown by both Tyree and Fish. Entangled with the whites, both do everything they can to protect themselves and their fortune. Filled with fear and distrust, they plan and scheme against the whites, knowing all along that they scarcely stand a chance. When Tyree is shot by the police he has served, Fish, outraged, goes into a violent tantrum, pounding on furniture and walls, and threatening to kill.

On his deathbed, Tyree tells Fish: "We won son!... They didn't get my money and that chief's done for... I'll be fighting that sonofabitch from my grave!...You got to go it alone. They done me in, but forgit it. We won!" [84] But Tyree maintains his attitude of outward

subservience to whites as he warns Fish: "I'm trying to save you, son. Do what they say! They ain't got no claims against you, 'less you make 'em scared...You won't ever want for anything...Look at that letter...It's my will. Make like you believe what they say. Let this blow over." 85

After Tyree's death, Fish is warned by some well-meaning friends who were also involved in Tyree's business. They advise him to leave town, as they plan to do; but Fish is determined to stay and fight it out. The police, still trying to get Fish to hand over the remainder of the cancelled checks, trap him with a white woman they have sent to his apartment. With Fish in custody on a false rape charge, they press him even harder to get the checks. Another Negro is put in Fish's cell to try to get Fish to confide. Realizing he has again been tricked, Fish attacks the "prisoner" and as a result is sentenced to serve eighteen months in jail in addition to the six he has already served. At the end of his servitude, Fish gives up, realizes he has no chance in Mississippi, and flees, not just to the North, but to France.

Flying over the Atlantic, Fish at last feels bound for freedom:

> He had fled a world that he had known and that had emotionally crucified him, but what was he here in this world whose impact loosed storms in his blood? Could he ever make the white faces

around him understand how they had charged his world with images of beckoning desire and dread? Naw, naw ...No one could believe the kind of life he had lived and was living. Was it not better to deny his world and accept the world that the others saw and lived in? . . .Above all, he was ashamed of his world, for the world about him had branded his world as bad, inferior. Moreover, he felt no moral strength or compulsion to defend his world. That in him which had always made him self-conscious was now the bud of a new possible life that was pressing ardently but timidly against the shell of the old to shatter it and be free.

This resolution of denial and acceptance that he was making was not born of a will toward deception; he was not "acting" now; it was a free gesture of faith welling up out of a yearning to be at last somewhere at home; it was his abject offer of a truce. Knowing that he was relatively free from fear and pressure, he was now more willingly anxious than ever to confess that he was maybe wrong and that others might be right. We was now voluntarily longing to pledge allegiance to a world whose brutal might could never compel him to love it with threats of death.[86]

CONCLUSIONS: THE LONG DREAM

In The Long Dream, Expatriate Wright goes back to the Mississippi setting of his early years where his own apartness from the world began. A few topical references (for example, the Korean War) fix the time in the mid 1950's, but Wright unfolds the story as if it were happening a full generation earlier, never referring to the changes in the larger society which have made Mississippi a part of a shrinking last stronghold of the white supremacy system. At the end, when his protagonist finally leaves there, Wright has him board a train in a deep Southern town, then picks him up soaring over the land, never allowing the reader to see him set foot for an instant in any of the places where so much has changed since Wright left the United States in 1946. He has him continue instead, aloft in his plane, straight across the sea bound for Paris.[87] "But there is still so much truth in his crude, pounding, wrathful book that no honest reader can remain wholly unmoved." [88]

THE CONCLUSION

Carl Milton Hughes said in his book The Negro Novelist that the most striking quality about Negro novels is their authentic interpretation of Negro life and the Negro world from experiences inside the restricted and isolated Negro world. Another significant aspect of the novels is their characterization of Negroes. The novels also give the aspirations and hopes of the American Negro. Realistically drawn pictures of the Negro life in American society are actually shocking because of the deviation from publicized and ordinary patterns of American life in the sense of standardized living. Sections of novels dealing with pertinent issues and positing demands of the Negro for a larger life become brochures of Negro life in the American cultural pattern. [89]

Richard Wright says of his own works: "I don't know if Native Son is a good book or a bad book. And I don't know if the book I'm working on now will be a good book or a bad book. And I really don't care. The mere writing of it will be a deeper satisfaction than any praise or blame from anybody. I feel that I'm lucky to be alive to write novels today, when the whole world is caught in the pangs of war and change. . . .We have only a money-grubbing, industrial civilization. But we do have in the Negro the embodiment of a past tragic enough to appease the spiritual hunger of even a Henry James; and we have in the oppression

of the Negro a shadow athwart our nation's life dense and heavy enough to satisfy even the gloomy broodings of a Hawthorne. And if Poe were alive he would not have to invent horror; horror would invent him." 90

FOOTNOTES

[1]Richard Wright, Native Son (New York: New American Library of World Literature, Incorporated, 1961). (Original publication: New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940).

[2]Richard Wright, The Long Dream (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1958).

[3]George E. Simpson and J. Milton Yinger, Racial and Cultural Minorities (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).

[4]Simpson, p. 190.

[5]Ibid., pp. 14, 19.

[6]Robert L. Sutherland, Color, Class, and Personality (American Council on Education, 1942), pp. 22-23.

[7]Simpson, pp. 196, 199.

[8]Ibid., pp. 212-215.

[9]Group for the Advancement of Psychiatry, Psychiatric Aspects of School Desegregation, Report No. 37, 1957, p. 32.

[10]Simpson, p. 215.

[11]Arnold Rose, The Negro's Morale (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1949), p. 89.

[12]Simpson, p. 217.

[13]Ibid., pp. 219-222.

[14]Ibid., p. 229.

[15]Charles S. Johnson, Patterns of Negro Segregation (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1943), p. 231.

[16]Simpson, p. 230.

[17]Simpson, pp. 230-236.

[18]E. Franklin Frazier, Black Bourgeoisie (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 213-231.

[19]Simpson, p. 239.

[20]Ibid., pp. 241-247.

[21]Gunnar Myrdal, An American Dilemma, Vol. I (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1944), pp. 38-39.

[22]Simpson, pp. 251-252.

[23]Carl Milton Hughes, The Negro Novelist (New York: The Citadel Press, 1953), pp. 43-44.

[24]Ibid., p. 44.

[25]David Daiches, Partisan Review (May-June, 1940), pp. 244-245.

[26]Hughes, p. 44.

[27]David L. Cohn, "The Negro Novel: Richard Wright," Atlantic Monthly, CLXV (May, 1940), pp. 659-660.

[28]Wright, Native Son, p. 20.

[29]Ibid., p. 270.

[30]Cohn, p. 660.

[31]Hughes, pp. 46, 60, 61.

[32]Wright, Native Son, p. 364.

[33]Hughes, p. 46.

[34]Ibid.

[35]Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1956), p. 369.

[36]Hughes, p. 47.

[37]Ibid., p. 54.

[38]Ibid., p. 55.

[39]Wright, Native Son, pp. 67-68.

[40]Richard Wright, "I Bite the Hand That Feeds Me," Atlantic Monthly, CLXV (June, 1940), p. 828.

[41]Ibid., p. 824.

[42]Constance Webb, "What's Next for Richard Wright?" Phylon, X, 2 (Second Quarter, 1949), p. 161.

[43]Hughes, pp. 60-61.

[44]Wright, Native Son, pp. 366-367.

[45]Hughes, p. 62.

[46]Ibid.

[47]Richard Wright, White Man, Listen (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Incorporated, 1957).

[48]Ibid., pp. 43-45.

[49]Ibid., pp. 46-47.

[50]Ibid., p. 51.

[51]Cohn, p. 659.

[52]Richard Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," Saturday Review of Literature, XXII (June 1, 1940), pp. 3,4, 17, 20.

[53]Hughes, p. 45.

[54]Ibid.

[55]Ibid., p. 64.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Webb, p. 162.

[58]Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," p. 18.

[59]Wright, "I Bite the Hand That Feeds Me," p. 828.

[60]Hughes, pp. 47-48.

[61]Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," p. 17.

[62]Hughes, pp. 47-48.

[63]Wright, The Long Dream, pp. 105-106,

[64]Grenville Hicks, "Power of Richard Wright," Saturday Review, XLI (October 18, 1958), p. 65.

[65]"Tract in Black and White," Time, LXXII (October 27, 1958), p. 96.

[66]Wright, The Long Dream, p. 65.

[67]Ibid., p. 79.

[68]"Tract in Black and White," p. 96.

[69]Wright, The Long Dream, p. 265.

[70]Harold Isaacs, "Five Writers and Their African Ancestors," Phylon, XXI, no. 3 (1960), p. 264.

[71]Ibid.

[72]Wright, The Long Dream, p. 32.

[73]Isaccs, p. 264.

[74]Wright, The Long Dream, pp. 33-34.

[75]Isaacs, p. 265.

[76]Wright, The Long Dream, p. 35.

[77]Ibid., p. 32.

[78]Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[79]Ibid., pp. 140, 141, 143.

[80]Ibid., p. 68.

[81]Kenneth Tynan, "The Long Dream: A Review," The New Yorker, XXXVI (March 5, 1960), p. 120.

[82]Wright, The Long Dream, p. 143.

[83]Ibid., pp. 198-199.

[84]Ibid., p. 297.

[85]Ibid.

[86]Ibid., p. 383.

[87]Isaacs, p. 256.

[88]Wright, "Tract in Black and White," p. 96.

[89]Hughes, p. 267.

[90]Wright, "How Bigger Was Born," p. 20.

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